

A faded, blue-tinted image of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes, positioned behind the title text.

DoD/VA Clinical Practice Guideline

Toward Improved Quality of Post-Deployment Care

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History



Post - Deployment Health Concerns

Not a New Concept

- ★ **Civil War - “Irritable Heart”**
- ★ **WW I - “Soldier’s Heart”**
- ★ **WW II - “Effort Syndrome”**
- ★ **Vietnam - “Agent Orange Syndrome”**
- ★ **Gulf War Syndrome**

Hyams, et al, Ann Int Med 1996

Gulf War Syndrome

We Sent the Wrong Risk Communication
Message

- ★ **“There is nothing wrong with you”**
- ★ **“It’s all in your head”**
- ★ **“We don’t care”**
- ★ **“You can’t be seen here”**

Gulf War Syndrome

DoD/VA Response

- ★ **Persian Gulf Registry**
- ★ **Comprehensive Clinical Evaluation Program**

Genesis-A Better Way



National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine

- The post-deployment period is a crucial time for carrying out medical evaluations and providing appropriate care for returning service members
 - Use an evidence-based approach to develop and continuously reevaluate clinical practice guidelines
 - Focus evaluation and care of deployed forces at the primary care-level
 - Enhance the continuity of care
 - Foster the establishment of ongoing therapeutic relationships

DoD/ VA

Executive Workgroup
**Cited Program Evaluation and
Recommendations by Numerous
Oversight Groups, Committees, and
Agencies**

- In the past work-ups not clinically driven
- Treat evaluation as a 'care' program vs 'standardized'
- Local primary care provider delivers care
- Central DoD\VA hub(s) for post-deployment health
 - DoD Clinical Center for Post Deployment Health
 - VA Center(s) for the Study of War Related Illnesses and Post Deployment Health Concerns

DoD/VA Executive Workgroup



“Implement IOM Recommendation

★ Develop CPG’s recognizing deployment health concerns

- Recognize deployment as a routine exposure
- Follow-up care managed by primary care provider
- Integrate with the Deployment Health Center(s)/War Illnesses Center(s) concept

• Ensure complementary DoD and VA

VA/DoD CPG Workgroup

Guidelines to aid primary care providers

★ **in evaluating patients with post deployment concerns**

★ **Identified goals & objectives**

- Achieve satisfaction & positive attitudes regarding post-deployment medical care
- Support patient education and communication
- Optimize data collection
- Prevention in subsequent deployments
- Provider education

Guideline Development

Multioorganizational Approach

The logo for the Military Health System, featuring a stylized white star with three red wavy lines to its left, and the text "Military Health System" below it.

- ★ **VA clinicians experienced with**
- ★ **gulf registry**
- DoD clinicians experienced with**
- ★ **comprehensive clinical**
- ★ **evaluation program**
- Army, Navy, Air Force**
- Experts from civilian academia**

Guideline Development



Multidisciplinary

★ **Medical disciplines**

- family practice
- internal medicine
- psychiatry
- preventive medicine
- infectious disease
- occupational health

★ **Allied clinical disciplines**

- psychology
- nursing
- social work
- clergy

★ **Essential non-clinical disciplines**

- risk communication
- toxicologist

Veteran Involvement



- ★ **Helped to develop the guideline document**
- ★ **Participated in toolkit development conference**
- ★ **Posted guideline document on the internet for public comment**

Systematic Basis for Guideline Content



- ★ **Scientific evidence considered first
- usually little direct evidence**
- ★ **Independent policy review group
recommendations (e.g., IoM,
advisory groups, RAND reports)**
- ★ **Consensus of experienced
clinicians**
- ★ **Consensus of guidelines working
group**

Post-Deployment Health Clinical Practice Guideline



The Message

- ★ To All: “Deployments are risky”
- ★ To the Deployer: “There is a system in place to take care of you IF you come back with a health concern”
- ★ A Reminder to the Provider: “Taking care of Service Members is our #1 job”